# ISMAEL

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وَسِّعْ مَكَانَكَ

"Enlarge your abode."

**FULFILLING THE PLEDGE OF WAQF**
ADDRESS BY HAZRAT KHALIFATUL MASIH V[aba]

**A WEEK IN ISLAMABAD**
ABID KHAN SAHIB'S DIARY

**A NEW MARKAZ PRECIOUS MOMENTS WITH HUZOOR**
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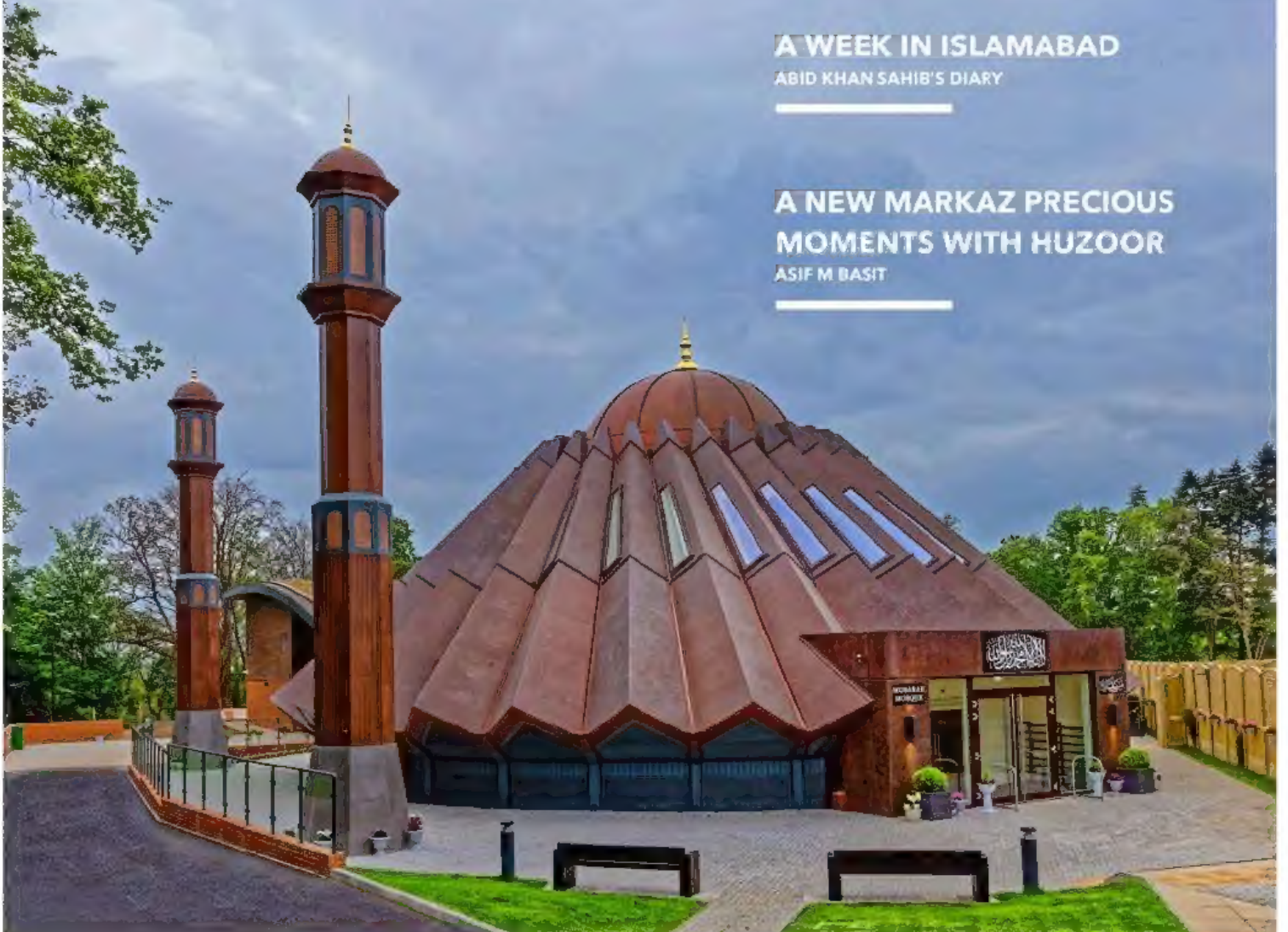
*"The primary purpose of this Convention is to enable every sincere individual to personally experience religious benefits; They may enhance their knowledge and –due to their being blessed and enabled by Allah, The Exalted- their perception [ of Allah ] may progress. Among its secondary benefits is that this congregational meeting together will promote mutual introduction among all brothers, and it will strengthen the fraternal ties within this Community."*

*(Ishtihar 7 Dec. 1892, Majmoo'ah Ishtiharat Vol. 1, Page 340).*

# FROM THE EDITOR

Part of the reason for fasting in the month of Ramadan is to express our devotion to Allah by leaving that which we are otherwise accustomed to. Food, drink, idle discussions and conjugal relations between husband and wife are what we can routinely become used to during our yearly schedule. However, during this entire month, we put aside our usual habits in a bid to set aside time for Allah throughout our daily schedule.

This training is something that Islam has prescribed for us with divine wisdom. Although the reasons behind this exercise are vast, but the one related to breaking our habits is what I would like to focus on here.

As Ahmadi Muslims generally, and as Waqifeen-e-Nau specifically, we are made aware of our roles and responsibilities from a very young age. The moral and spiritual training that we undergo at homes from birth and under the Jamaat's nizam at around the age of 7 reflects the tasks that lie ahead of us and that must be achieved if we really do claim to be loyal servants of Khilafat.

Living in a world where Western influence dominates in almost every country of the world, it is undoubtedly something very unique to still believe in a deity that communicates with its creation and a leadership that is directed under divine command.

Yet, in such circumstances, we have vowed to cut ourselves off from the materialistic lifestyles that we were previously accustomed to or acquainted with at school, college, university and work places and live our lives in line with God's instructions and the example of the prophets that came to pave the right paths for us.

Ramadan teaches us to bear difficulties throughout the month, waking up every day in very early hours to worship him, spending the nights in nawafil and passing each and every minute of the day with the experience of extreme hunger and thirst. With breaking these habits, we are effectively taught to mould ourselves in line with God's pleasure, becoming devout servants of Allah and compassionate members of society.

In a world that is drifting away from religion at a frighteningly rapid pace, to claim to believe so powerfully in a God Who speaks and to pledge one's life for the sake of a human being (i.e. the Holy Prophet Muhammad[sa]) is a unique thing. Some might say that it is quite odd to even think along these lines, but as Ahmadi Muslims who have devoted each and every second of our lives for the sake of the Jamaat, we believe in this purpose with full conviction.

When we break habits to mould ourselves according to Allah's desire, Allah the Almighty responds to this with a habit that He will never break – sending blessings upon his devoted servants repeatedly.

Hazrat Musleh-e-Maud[ra] once said in a Friday Sermon on the subject of Ramadan and Gods blessings:

"[Allah] is free from any habits, yet he bears habit-like characteristics in that when He does something, He repeats it again. Man, too, has this characteristic. Some people have the habit of shaking their feet or hands and they continue to shake them. The definition of habit is this – to repeatedly do something. This is a quality of Allah as well, that when He sends down blessings at a certain time, He repeatedly sends down blessings at that specific time. This is also a law of nature. Under God's attribute that bears resemblance with having habits, as the Quran was revealed during the month of Ramadan, if people follow the Prophet[sa] who was given the Quran, then those who separate themselves from the world and whilst living in it have no connection with it, who reduce their sleep and food and water intake and who abstain from idle talk, such people receive divine communication with God. God Almighty has selected this month for divine communication."

(Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad[ra], Khutabat-e-Mahmud, Vol. 15, p. 526, 21 December 1934)

Therefore, we should make all efforts to not only ensure that we break our bad habits for the rest of the year after Ramadan, but also try our utmost to develop a living connection with Allah in Ramadan that lasts for not just the rest of the year, but the rest of our lives.

WELCOME TO

# ISMAEL MAGAZINE

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## CONTENTS

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بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ ۝

اَلۡحَمۡدُ لِلّٰہِ رَبِّ الۡعٰلَمِیۡنَ ۝ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ ۝ مٰلِکِ یَوۡمِ الدِّیۡنِ ۝

اِیَّاکَ نَعۡبُدُ وَ اِیَّاکَ نَسۡتَعِیۡنُ ۝ اِہۡدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الۡمُسۡتَقِیۡمَ ۝

صِرَاطَ الَّذِیۡنَ اَنۡعَمۡتَ عَلَیۡہِمۡ ۬ۙ غَیۡرِ الۡمَغۡضُوۡبِ عَلَیۡہِمۡ وَ لَا الضَّآلِّیۡنَ ۝

*In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful*
*All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds,*
*The Gracious, the Merciful,*
*Master of the Day of Judgement.*
*Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we implore for help.*
*Guide us in the right part –*
*The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed [Thy] blessings,*
*those who have not incurred [Thy] displeasure, and those who have not gone astray.*

*(Surah al-Fatihah, Ch.1: V.1-7)*

*Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih II and Musleh-e-Maud, may Allah be pleased with him, says with regard to verses 6 and 7 of Surah al-Fatihah:*

With regard to this prayer, there is another important point worthy of noting. It is something that the Companions[ra] kept in mind and of which they showed such a remarkable example that no other such example can be found in other peoples. If the Muslims who came after them also kept it in mind, they would undoubtedly have shown such an outstanding example and world history would have remembered them forever. But unfortunately, the Muslims forgot the golden principle mentioned in this verse and ruined the standard on which God wanted to raise them.

Even today, if Muslims make this principle their main objective, all their problems can immediately disappear, and they will be able to achieve unprecedented honour and magnificence.

The lesson that has been mentioned in this verse is that each nation has a particular purpose and strives to achieve it. Similarly, the creation of this world also has a purpose, and the people who achieve the purpose of this creation are the only ones who deserve to be named as the real purpose of the creation of the world.

Prophet Adam[as] came into the world and taught people certain forms of good. At that time, his teaching was extremely remarkable and those who practiced it brought about great moral and spiritual changes in themselves. Their intellectual capacities began to surpass those who preceded them.

Nevertheless, man had not yet reached the perfection for which he was created, so the search for progress continued until Prophet Noah[as] appeared. He brought man to a higher level of progress, but even though people had evolved in their moral, spiritual and intellectual state thanks to Noah[as], the purpose for which man was created had not yet been fulfilled.

After him came other prophets and this process continued until the arrival of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. He revealed all the secrets that were still hidden from man and mentioned all the moral, spiritual and intellectual facts necessary for man's progress and, so to speak, he brought religion to perfection at an intellectual level and announced, "This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour upon you" (Surah al-Maidah, Ch.5: V.4).

However, until this perfect teaching was put into practice, its purpose could not be accomplished, and the arrival of the Holy Prophet[sa] could not be said to have been completely successful. For this reason, Allah the Exalted taught the following prayer in Surah al-Fatihah: "Guide us in the right path – the path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed [Thy] blessings", and advised us in other words to always watch over that goal and that *maqam-e-mahmud* [highly praised rank] which was the priority of the world and the reason for which it had undertaken its spiritual journey from the beginning, and whose different levels were reached by men through the different prophets, and whose acquisition of the last rank was entrusted to the Holy Prophet Muhammad[sa]. So hasten to reach it.

Therefore, to ask that He grant us the favours of those already rewarded means: "O Allah, grant us the kindness of the people of Adam[as], and make our intellectual progress similar to that of the people of Noah[as], and bring us to the rank of the people of Abraham[as], and attribute to us the excellences of the people of Moses[as], and give us a part of the Messiah's[as] spiritual influence. And so, by raising us step by step in our spirituality, bring us closer to the rank of Muhammad[sa] so that the mission of the Holy Prophet[sa] may be successful and he may be blessed with the *maqam-e-mahmud* [highly praised rank]."

"The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed [Thy] blessings" therefore means the final rank of human excellence, towards which man has been travelling since the beginning; towards which prophets were entrusted the responsibility of guiding mankind to its different earlier levels and towards which the Holy Prophet[sa] was commissioned to take us to its final level.

Through this prayer, Muslims effectively make the following supplication: "O Allah, You have certainly completed religion through the Holy Prophet Muhammad[sa]. All that remains for us now is to conform our actions with this religion, and to manifest those hidden and noble potentials that had already been developed through the various prophets, the development of which is the ultimate goal of man's creation. We are here, ready to accomplish this task, so help us and at the same time, make us cross all those levels of divine recognition that had been crossed individually by different people through their different prophets so that the goal of man's creation may be accomplished through the Ummah of Muhammad[sa]."

The Companions[ra] of the Holy Prophet[sa] bore this in mind and in their time set an unprecedented example to the world by generating in them the good conducts of all peoples that had appeared before them at the same time.

Today, if our Jamaat once again prioritises this objective, the time for the designation of the Holy Prophet[sa] to *maqam-e-mahmud* [the highly praised rank] will come even closer, and the world will be protected from its disturbing agitations.

*(Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad[ra], Tafsir-e-Kabir, Vol. 1, pp. 44-45)*

عَنْ طَلْحَةَ بْنِ عُبَيْدِ اللهِ أَنَّ أَعْرَابِيًّا، جَاءَ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ثَائِرَ الرَّأْسِ فَقَالَ يَا رَسُولَ اللهِ أَخْبِرْنِي مَاذَا فَرَضَ اللهُ عَلَيَّ مِنَ الصَّلَاةِ فَقَالَ: "

الصَّلَوَاتِ الْخَمْسَ، إِلَّا أَنْ تَطَوَّعَ شَيْئًا ". فَقَالَ أَخْبِرْنِي مَا فَرَضَ اللهُ عَلَيَّ مِنَ الصِّيَامِ فَقَالَ: " شَهْرَ رَمَضَانَ، إِلَّا أَنْ تَطَوَّعَ شَيْئًا ". فَقَالَ أَخْبِرْنِي بِمَا فَرَضَ اللهُ عَلَيَّ مِنَ الزَّكَاةِ فَقَالَ فَأَخْبَرَهُ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ شَرَائِعَ الإِسْلَامِ. قَالَ وَالَّذِي أَكْرَمَكَ لَا أَتَطَوَّعُ شَيْئًا، وَلَا أَنْقُصُ مِمَّا فَرَضَ اللهُ عَلَيَّ شَيْئًا. فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: " أَفْلَحَ إِنْ صَدَقَ، أَوْ دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِنْ صَدَقَ ".

**Hazrat Talha bin Ubaidullah, Allah be pleased with him, narrated that a Bedouin with unkempt hair came to the Prophet of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, and said,**

"O Prophet[sa] of Allah! Inform me of what Allah has made compulsory for me as regards the prayers." The Prophet[sa] replied, "You have to offer perfectly the five compulsory prayers, unless you want to pray nawafil [voluntary ones]." The bedouin further asked, "Inform me of what Allah has made compulsory for me as regards fasting." The Prophet[sa] responded, "You have to fast during the whole month of Ramadan, unless you want to fast more as nawafil." The bedouin further asked, "Tell me how much Zakat Allah has enjoined on me." Thus, the Prophet[sa] of Allah informed him about all the rules [fundamentals] of Islam. The Bedouin then said, "By Him Who has honoured you, I will neither perform any nawafil nor will I decrease what Allah has enjoined on me." The Holy Prophet[sa] said, "If he is saying the truth, he will succeed", or he said, "He will be granted Paradise."

*(Sahih al-Bukhari, Kitab al-Saum [The Book of Fasting])*

# REALITY OF
# SIN AND REPENTANCE

"The reality of sin is not that Allah first created it and then thousands of years later conjured up the idea of forgiveness. For example, a fly has two wings, one containing poison and the other its antidote. Similarly, human beings have two wings, one of sin and the other of shame, repentance and remorse. This is a general rule. For example, if someone were to violently beat a slave, remorse would overwhelm such a one. It is as if both wings move in unison. Poison is not without its antidote. Now the question is, why was this poison created in the first place? The answer is that although this is a poison, if harnessed, it possesses remedial properties. If sin did not exist, the venom of vanity would surge forth within man and lead to his ruin, but repentance prevents this from happening. Sin protects man from the calamity of arrogance and conceit. When the Prophet Muhammad[sa] would seek forgiveness seventy times in one day – despite being sinless – how great an effort should we exert? Only one who is content with sin does not repent; an individual who considers sin to be evil will ultimately refrain from it.

It is narrated in a Hadith that when a person weeps before Allah time and again to seek forgiveness, ultimately, God says, "We have forgiven you, now do as you please." This actually means that the heart of such a one has been transformed and thereafter he shall feel an innate aversion towards sin. No one who observes a sheep eating filth is driven by greed to consume it as well. Similarly, a person who is forgiven by Allah will never commit sin. Muslims instinctively abhor the flesh of swine though they may be indulged in thousands of other unlawful and forbidden things. The wisdom in placing this form of disgust in Muslims is to illustrate that mankind should develop a similar revulsion towards sin."

*(Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad[as], Malfuzat, Vol. 1, pp. 3-4)*

# A WEEK IN ISLAMABAD

## ABID KHAN SAHIB'S DIARY

(Only small portions of the diaries written by Abid Waheed Khan Sahib are included in Ismael. Readers are encouraged to go to: www.alislam.org/library/topics/diary/ to derive maximum benefit from these diaries)

With the grace of Allah, on 15 April 2019, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad[aa] moved to Islamabad after 16 blessed years living in the premises of Masjid Fazl in London.

Occasionally, especially in the past few months, Huzoor himself told me about the progress of the new Markaz under construction. Nonetheless, there are many other people, who were closely involved in the process who will know much more than me about the background of the move and may be able to shed light upon Huzoor's close involvement at every stage of the process.

Furthermore, already Al Hakam has published a very moving account entitled A New Markaz, in which Huzoor himself is quoted. So there is nothing I can add that is of value regarding the move itself.

However, I was fortunate to be present every day during Huzoor's final few days at Masjid Fazl and also during his first week in Islamabad and so I will try to narrate a few things in this regard.

## A VERY SPECIAL PLACE

Like every Ahmadi Muslim, especially those who lived in or around London, I felt a mixture of emotions as the Markaz shifted. On the one hand, I was sad to see the end of the era of Masjid Fazl as the headquarters of the Jamaat, whilst on the other hand, I was overjoyed to see the progress of the Jamaat and the blessings of Allah the Almighty that the move to Islamabad heralded

Masjid Fazl was (and remains) a very special place Thousands upon thousands of Ahmadis have their own memories of it. My own started in childhood. It was the mosque I used to visit with my parents as a child from time to time. I remember the long and tiring car journeys from Hartlepool and also how any fatigue was replaced by sheer excitement upon seeing the joyful smile of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IVth

A few weeks after the death of my mother in December 1994, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IVth invited me to spend a week with him at the Fazl Mosque during Ramadan. It was there that the grief and sense of bereavement I felt was washed away through the love of Khilafat.

Every morning, I used to have the honour of doing sehri (pre-dawn breakfast) with Huzoor at his residence. I would spend my day with his grandchildren and every so often Huzoor would join us for a few moments and would always ask how I was

In early 2000 after the passing of my father, Masjid Fazl was once again the mosque where I went to heal the raw wounds of grief. A few days after his death my entire family went for mulaqat. Apart from my elder brother and elder sisters, my uncles and aunts were also present.

I was sitting in the corner of the office and thought that Huzoor could not even see me. Yet, he saw me and he saw my pain and sadness. I was left shocked, humbled and amazed when Huzoor looked over the chairs directly in front of him and turned his attention towards me, a worthless seventeen-year-old boy.

Very affectionately and lovingly, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IVth said.

*"I am worried about you."*

Huzoor then looked at my siblings and elder relatives and said

*"It is better that Abid gets married when he is young. He is the one whose future is not yet settled."*

The knowledge that Huzoor was concerned about me and would surely pray for me instantly removed the fear and desperation I had felt.

That distress and panic returned in April 2003 and when Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IVth passed away in 2003 at the Fazl Mosque. I feared that the personal relationship and connection I had made with Khilafat was gone. Yet, due to the sheer grace of Allah, the most blessed days, most honoured times, most cherished moments lay ahead spent in the company of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih Vaa

It was the mosque where Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V[aa] arranged my marriage. It was the mosque where he reassured me in our bleakest days that Allah the Almighty would bless us with children.

Most significantly, it was the mosque where he graciously accepted the service of a young, inexperienced boy. It was the mosque where over the next twelve years, I learned from him, felt his love, experienced the grandeur of Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyya time and time again and learned life lessons and witnessed true spirituality and integrity of the highest possible order on a daily basis from the greatest of teachers during thousands of mulaqats.

Masjid Fazl was my sanctuary. It was the centre of my life.

Hence, where I never asked Huzoor about his move to Islamabad out of respect and obedience, it was also out of fear. The fear of the unknown. How would life be in Islamabad? Would it be different? Could it ever be the same?

Where individuals like me are blinded by how things affect us personally, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih[aa] is constantly looking at the collective needs of the Jamaat.

This was again made apparent in Huzoor's Friday Sermon on 12 April 2019, when he announced the move to Islamabad and the reasons for it. Huzoor made it clear that this move was necessary and part of the decree of Allah the Almighty.

## A FINAL MEETING

On 14 April 2019, one day prior to the move, I reported to Masjid Fazl in the morning, as Huzoor had a meeting with a senior representative of the United Nations.

Much of Huzoor's office had been emptied. The bookcases, previously filled from side to side, were now bare. The Private Secretary's office was jam-packed with boxes, either packed or about to be. Many had already been sent to Islamabad.

The meeting with the guest went well. He spoke of his amazement at Huzoor's schedule.

Upon this, Huzoor smiled and said:

*"The person who told you my schedule knows only 5 or 10 per cent of it!"*

At the end of the meeting, the guest requested to have a photo with Huzoor.

The Jamaat photographer, Omair Aleem, duly took it. A representative of MTA was also present to film those concluding moments of Huzoor's final meeting with a dignitary or guest at Masjid Fazl.

After the official photo, I was taken aback when Huzoor asked me to join them for another photo. I had been present whilst photos had been taken with hundreds of guests and dignitaries during the preceding years and Huzoor had never once told me to join the photo.

It occurred to me that perhaps Huzoor realised it was to be his final ever meeting with a guest at Masjid Fazl and so, out of grace and benevolence, he permitted me to be part of that historic moment. I felt emotional and hugely grateful.

## A NEW MARKAZ

Huzoor's departure from Masjid Fazl took place shortly after the Asr prayer on 15 April 2019. Along with the other two thousand or so people present, it felt incredibly emotional to wave goodbye to Huzoor, even though I knew I would be travelling daily to Islamabad to see him.

Any sadness felt that Huzoor had left Masjid Fazl instantly gave way to feelings of intense happiness when I saw the Islamabad complex for the first time. It was breath-taking. It was all that I had imagined but much, much more.

The mosque was beautiful, gracefully designed and a fitting home for Khilafat. The new offices of Private Secretary, Wakalat-e-Tabshir, Wakalat-e-Maal and Wakalat-e-Tamil-o-Tanfidh, were not yet fully operational or set up but were clearly much better designed and more conducive to work than their predecessors.

However, I had not yet seen the one office that I desired to see the most. The only one I was interested in.

The curiosity to see Huzoor and his new office was my overriding emotion and heartfelt desire.

*more work to do on the mosque and some other buildings and once they are complete we will also make a small park for children to come and play in."* Every detail of the complex had been built and designed with Huzoor's guidance. The way Huzoor described Islamabad it seemed and felt like a paradise on earth

The rest of my mulaqat that day was a source of deep embarrassment and shame for me

Earlier, I had submitted for approval a video report MTA News had prepared about Huzoor's move to Islamabad. However, during mulaqat, Huzoor made it very clear that he did not consider the report to be adequate. Particularly, Huzoor emphasised that the messaging and tone of the report was misleading

Huzoor said:

*"In the report, you have ignored the fact that the move to Islamabad is something that Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV[rh] personally desired and it is not a new concept that I myself have developed during this era. Rather this move was destined ever since the Islamabad land was purchased. It is actually a manifestation of how the institution of Khilafat e- Ahmadiyya continues to fulfil the mission of the Promised Messiah[as]. If something is not complete in one period of Khilafat, Allah the Almighty fulfils it in a future period. As I said in my sermon, everything has an appointed time."*

I felt mortified and devastated. Yet, also witnessed Huzoor's grace and benevolence. After explaining the weakness of the report, Huzoor very lovingly guided me about how to improve it and personally dictated parts of the script

As the mulaqat came to an end and I was leaving his office, Huzoor said:

*"In the time of Hazrat Musleh e Maud[ra], the Sadr Majlis Khuddam ul Ahmadiyya was Hazrat Mirza Nasir Ahmad[rh] and, one year, after attending the first day of the Jalsa Salana, Hazrat Musleh e-Maud[ra] felt and observed that there was not enough space to easily accommodate all of the people attending and he mentioned this in his speech on the first day of the Jalsa."*

Narrating what happened thereafter, Huzoor said:

*"On hearing the comments of Hazrat Musleh e Maud[ra], Hazrat Mirza Nasir Ahmad[rh], as Sadr Khuddam, gathered together the Khuddam and they worked all night to expand the Jalsa Gah site and to provide all the required facilities.*
*The next morning when he saw the transformation, Hazrat Musleh-e-Maud[ra] was pleased."*

Huzoor continued

*"This is the spirit that MTA workers and the Waqifeen should all work with today and always. No one who has dedicated his life for the service of Islam should think that they clock off at 8pm, rather they should not rest until the work is done properly."*

Huzoor's words were motivating and inspiring

I left the mulaqat saddened that we had not reached the standards expected by Khalifa e Waqt but also sure that we could make a much better report now that Huzoor had given us such profound direction and guidance.

Whilst sitting in my car, I rewrote the script of the news report and thereafter the MTA team worked till the early hours producing a report that was according to Huzoor's guidance.

Alhamdolillah, the next day, Huzoor told me that he had seen the updated report and that it was much improved. Though, Huzoor, also ensured that we remained humble

Huzoor said

*"Your revised news report is much better than the earlier draft. However, I do not think it will be as popular as the Al Hakam article published earlier today, in which it mentions the legacy of Masjid Fazl and the reasons for moving here."*

Upon this, I responded:

*"Huzoor, you are right the Al Hakam article is better because it contains your own direct words about the move of the Markaz. Nothing can come close to the direct words of Khalifa e Waqt."*

# Essence of sacrifice in Ramadan

**On 21 December 1934, Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, Musleh-e-Maud[ra] said:**

# A PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF ETIKAF AND WHAT TO EXPECT

***Eakan Ahmed, New York City***
*Eakan Ahmed is a high school student who aspires to serve the Jamaat as a lawyer accountant or in finance*

Etikaf is a practice in Islam, consisting of staying in seclusion for a certain number of days, devoting oneself to prayer and separating oneself from worldly affairs. It is a blessed experience that allows one to sacrifice their daily routine and spend time in the remembrance and worship of Allah the Almighty. It is a time of spiritual seclusion.

In fact, it is a practice of the prophets and saints of Allah to enter a time of seclusion and worship their Creator. This is found in the case of Hazrat Moses[as], about whom Allah the Almighty states:

"And We made Moses a promise of thirty nights and supplemented them with ten. Thus the period appointed by his Lord was completed – forty nights" (The Holy Quran, Ch.7: V.143)

Moses[as] leaving his people to worship Allah for 40 days was an early example of spiritual seclusion. The Holy Prophet Muhammad[sa] throughout his life, both before and after receiving revelation would go into seclusion to worship Allah. Prophet Muhammad[sa] periodically traveled to a cave named Mount Hira, three miles north of Mecca, to spend many hours alone in prayer and reflection. The Promised Messiah[as] travelled to Hoshiarpur to isolate himself for a period of forty days during which he would worship his beloved God Almighty.

We see that men of God often went into a time of seclusion to enhance their relationship with Allah the Almighty. In Islam, we are also given this opportunity in the form of Etikaf. During the month of Ramadan, we strive to attain nearness of Allah the Almighty. After completing 20 days of fasting in the month of Ramadan, a believer is encouraged to complete the remaining 10 days with greater vigour and enthusiasm.

Hazrat Abdullah bin Umar[ra] said:

"The Prophet[sa] of Allah used to practice Etikaf in the last ten days of the month of Ramadan."

nearness and felt content at heart.

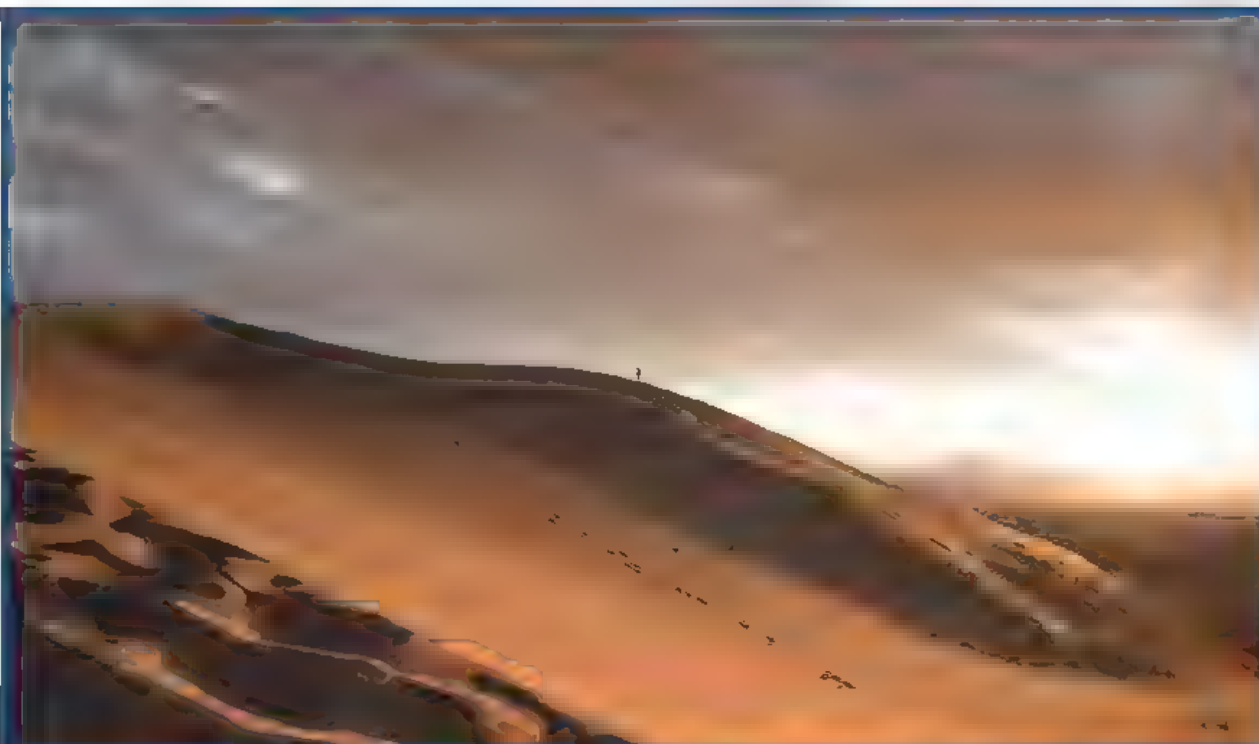
The day of Lailat-ul-Qadr was another attraction for me to perform Etikaf. Lailat-ul-Qadr, or the Night of Decree, is the night when the first verses of the Quran were revealed to Prophet Muhammad[sa]. It is one of the nights of the last ten days of Ramadan. Allah the Almighty states in the Holy Quran:

"And what shall make thee know what the Night of Decree is? The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months." (Ch.97: V.3-4)

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II[ra] writes in his Tafsir-e-Kabir that the words "Therein descend angels and the Spirit" (Ch.97: V.5) signify that "the Angels of God descend to meet and satisfy every religious need and to remove all obstacles and impediments from the way of the expansion and spread of the new message." (Tafsir-e-Kabir, pp.334-337)

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV[rh] stated once that the night of Lailat-ul-Qadr can be shown to man in different ways, such as sudden heavy rain or a lighting bolt. According to the hadith of the Holy Prophet Muhammad[sa] in which he stated: "I have been shown Lailat-ul-Qadr, then I was caused to forget it, so seek it in the last ten nights, on the odd-numbered nights" (Sunan Ibn Majah), I too stayed up the last ten nights of Ramadan, especially the odd nights. On the 27$^{th}$ night, me and the brothers felt it was the night of Lailat-ul-Qadr because there was sudden rain and lightening, which was could be a sign according to Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV[rh]. Allah the Almighty knows the true date of Lailat-ul-Qadr, but I tried to ask forgiveness from Allah and seek for His Mercy those nights. The Holy Prophet[sa] said: "Whoever establishes the prayers on the night of Qadr out of sincere faith and hoping to attain Allah's rewards, then all their past sins will be forgiven." (Sahih al-Bukhari)

Alhamdolillah, performing Etikaf was a blessed experience, one that I will never forget. It is an experience that allows one to establish and maintain a relationship with Allah the Almighty, and also increase their knowledge of Islam. I definitely encourage all brothers and sisters to preform Etikaf and to always remember to put prayer and worship of Allah the Almighty before all things.

I intend to do Etikaf this year as well, Insha Allah. May Allah help all of us all to engage in sincere worship in the month of Ramadan and throughout the year.

# A PERSONAL REFLECTION OF RAMADHAN

By Abdul Salam Bhatti, USA
Abdul Salam works in business telecom and IT support and aspires to serve the Jamaat through MTA as a writer and producer.

Ramadan is an entire month devoted to practice self-control and focus on self-improvement and doing good works. It is the month in which the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, received the first revelation from the archangel Gabriel[as], as well as the month in which Gabriel[as] would review the revelation with Prophet Muhammad[sa].

Chapter 2 verse 184 apprises about fasting for Muslims as it was prescribed for people before them:

"O ye who believe! fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become righteous".

Hazrat Abu Hurairah[ra] related that the Holy Prophet[sa] said:

"Whoever fasts during Ramadan out of sincere faith and hoping to attain Allah's rewards, then all their past sins will be forgiven." (Sahih al-Bukhari) ❯

The purpose of Ramadan falls under three categories:

1. "So that you may become righteous"

2. "That you may exalt Allah for His having guided you"

3. "That you may be grateful"

It is human nature that all people err, in this state of imperfection we must understand that the only path to salvation is through Allah. Individuals can lift themselves according to one standard of excellence, however in doing so, they may be deficient in other important standards.

The teachings within the Holy Quran guide us towards the best standard of excellence which is Taqwa – righteousness. In today's material world, we lose sight of Allah in our pursuit of material wealth. Our lives are full of responsibilities and commitments and in this chaos, we can begin to erode our focus on the oneness of Allah. Ramadan allows us to refocus on the proper path. During this month we abandon those acts that drive us away from Allah and surround ourselves with a righteous environment in order to gain Taqwa.

The Holy Quran is the perfect Book. It is a guidance for the righteous. Allah has given us the proper understanding of what factors of life are important. This focus allows mankind to live harmoniously with one another and develop spiritually and materialistically prosperous societies. We Exalt Allah for this guidance and seek to align ourselves with the straight path. Before the time of Ramadan, we are busy with our own lives and may lose sight on the proper behavior and attitude of a believer.
During the time of Ramadan, we immerse ourselves within the Quran so that we may exalt Allah for his guidance.

So, how do Ahmadi Muslims endure and relish this month of fasting in the United States? While we fast during the day, we compensate by eating through the night, just the opposite of what the rest of the country is doing. The hardest part about fasting in America is that you find yourself fasting in a country where eating is a form of entertainment; where meals, coffee breaks and snacks never seem to cease. Some Middle Eastern restaurants here will set up outdoor tents where hungry Muslims and their families will come to break their fast at sunset. Families and friends gather to break their fast and celebrate the holy month together in a magical communal evening.

Human nature also is easy to forget true hardship. As material wealth is amassed, people begin to have newer standards of living. As we increase our incomes year by year, it is easy to forget the hardships of others. In fact, some may feel entitled to their own wealth and look towards the less privileged with disdain. Those who think all their success is strictly due to their own action are blind; Allah is the source of all beneficence. We should be grateful for our material wealth and be willing to sacrifice our riches to help those less fortunate.

Ramadan and fasting is a perfect method to teach mankind the value of comfort.
To a normal citizen, food is plenty, and the pursuit of food diverts to attaining pleasure rather than fulfilling a need. Fasting allows a person to reset themselves and understand the value of food.
Also, fasting allows a normal person to empathise with a starving person in poverty. Through the act of fasting, one learns to appreciate even simple food and can sympathise with the less privileged.

# A NEW MARKAZ

## PRECIOUS MOMENTS WITH HUZOOR

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# WHAT JAMIA HAS TO OFFER

By Ataul Fatir Tahir, UK

Ataul Fatir Tahir has recently graduated from Jamia Ahmadiyya UK and is awaiting further instructions on where his first posting to serve the Jamaat will be.

**Traversing the seven years of Jamia Ahmadiyya is a journey thousands have accomplished since the historic inception of the Shahid Degree. Taking up the challenge of Jamia (or for that matter, devoting your life) is a bold move; an open declaration of loyalty to God – the Judge being Himself.**

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V[aa] in his recent address to graduates of Jamia Ahmadiyaa UK, Germany and Canada reminded them of this declaration, saying: "You have offered yourselves, out of your own will, for this task. Thus, always remember that you must fully employ all of your faculties to fulfil this covenant like those who are loyal."

The "task", Huzoor[aa] described, is to fulfil the "mission of the renaissance of Islam" initiated by the Promised Messiah[as] and, thereafter, continued by his Khulafa.

Jamia Ahmadiyya serves as a training ground for students to prepare themselves for this task. The institution incorporates a multi-faceted

system, developed originally in Qadian and Rabwah under the guidance of Khulafa, to train students. Academic progression in Islamic studies, spiritual development and moral direction are fundamental focuses alongside areas such as character building, interpersonal skills and even physical development.

Students of Jamia Ahmadiyya UK (where I studied) are immensely blessed and fortunate to have the selfless attention, care and guidance of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V[aa] who regularly takes time out of his busy schedule to meet, guide and direct the students both in his office and at the Jamia campus on. The guidance of Huzoor[aa] is the best possible training a missionary could receive for the magnanimous task of spreading Islam Ahmadiyyat.

Throughout the seven years, Jamia students from the United Kingdom bear witness to Huzoor's deep affection, fatherly guidance, endless prayers and unique spiritual mentoring. He is pillar of strength and comfort for students; granting us benevolent personal mulaqats, answering our questions with depth, sharing light humour, listening to our worries, paying personal interest in our studies and individually guiding us at every step – a total blessing of God and kindness from our beloved Imam[aa]. The (often individual and personal) insight and direction Huzoor[aa] counsels towards provides the perfect building blocks for students to develop both spiritually and academically. Thus, the utmost paramount and effective "training" received at Jamia Ahmadiyya UK is the priceless attachment to Khilafat – words fail to serve justice in describing the significance of this.

Revolving around the nucleus of Khilafat are essential processes and experiences that mould a Jamia student. The spacious, lush green and idiosyncratic campus of Jamia Ahmadiyya nestled away in the woodland of Hampshire provides a comfortable and fitting atmosphere for studies; the nautical design of the building adds to the temperament.

Courses and learning are defined by various subjects, the core of which is an in-depth study of the Quran, with its translation and commentaries. Teachers (most of whom are experts in various disciplines) immerse the students in the books of Hadith, Islamic history,

history of Ahmadiyyat, intricacies of Arabic and Urdu literature and language, the realm of developing a living relationship with God, laws of fiqh (jurisprudence), world religions and of course the enlightening writings of the Promised Messiah[as] and his Khulafa. In fact, as the Imam of the age, all studies take place through the lens of the Promised Messiah[as], providing the clearest picture of the truth.

An opportunity to grow academically is integral at Jamia Ahmadiyya and students are themselves startled with the progress over the seven-year course. However, Jamia is just the stepping stone towards academic progression.

A crucial trait for any missionary is an aptitude to cooperate, interact and coexist with an array of personalities. Relevantly, Jamia is a cauldron of diversity – at campus you live, eat, pray, study and laugh alongside a plethora of personalities, thus providing an ideal atmosphere to learn, get along and interact with people from numerous backgrounds, a vital skill for the field to come.

A great deal of theory is taught at Jamia, and prior to a specific guidance of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V[aa], practicing what you had learnt was somewhat vague in practical terms. However, at the opening ceremony of the campus of Jamia Ahmadiyya UK in Haslemere, Huzoor expressed that the town of Haslemere is the very "laboratory" in which to practice what we are taught in Jamia, all to be done through our actions. Huzoor[aa] said:

"Your good conduct should always set you apart from all others. Your behaviour should be such that the local people, no matter what religion or belief they subscribe to, become naturally attracted to your kind and courteous manners. Remember, you must always discharge the rights of all people and must spread peace wherever you go." (https://www.pressahmadiyya.com/press-releases/2012/11/new-jamia-ahmadiyya-uk-building-inaugurated/)

The Promised Messiah[as] described the imperative yet testing trait of obedience as "shedding one's own skin". Obedience has been an integral teaching of the Holy Quran, the Holy Prophet[sa] and the Promised Messiah[as]. Accordingly, students at the institution are given special training in obedience and are expected to display the best possible standards of obedience. There is a variety of rules in place at Jamia Ahmadiyya and though difficult at times, one realises the importance of obedience and the benefits of adhering to these rules, such as restrictions on mobile phones and laptops. Without obedience, a Jamaat cannot function at its very best and unity ceases to exist.

Spirituality and progressing in the search of Allah has always been an integral part of Jamia. Students are given the atmosphere in which they can grow closer to Allah. Part of the (somewhat) strict timetable of Jamia is to ensure the rights of Allah are carried out; prayers, recitation of the Holy Quran and voluntary prayers. With academic progress, spiritual progress remains a crucial element of what Jamia offers – after all, missionaries are present to serve the Jamaat of Allah the Almighty, therefore a close connection with him is a must. However, like all things, personal effort and dedication is the only way to progress in spirituality. Jamia aims to create the conditions in which it is easier to grow spiritually.

Since the inception of Jamia Ahmadiyya in Qadian and then in Rabwah, sports and physical challenges have been part and parcel of the Jamia course, producing extremely talented sportsmen. Physical toughness, grit, fitness are all key components instilled in students as traits that also aid in life at large.

In hindsight, Jamia Ahmadiyya provides a holistic character-building atmosphere where students, if they try, can develop their personality and character whilst developing a relationship with Allah. The end of Jamia is just the end of the beginning and the true test of what we have learnt in Jamia is faced after a student graduates from Jamia.

the Promised Messiah(as) said that a person who does not meticulously follow the commands of Allah and fails to recognise that the worship of Allah is his life's overriding objective cannot attain the status of a true believer.

Thus, you should understand that even though you are living in a Western society, you must live your lives in an Islamic way seeking to attain the pleasure of Allah the Almighty. You must resolutely keep hold of your religious values and traditions. You must bring about those pious changes in your life that will enable you to fulfil the rights of Allah the Almighty and His Creation. You must always seek to improve and better yourself and to raise your spiritual and moral standards and increase your knowledge. The Promised Messiah(as) also taught that those who associated themselves with him should devote their lives to their faith in the same way he did. So, we must keep the great personal example of the Promised Messiah(as) firmly within our sights at all times. During his life, the Promised Messiah(as) devoted his every day and every night for the sake of Islam. Till his final breath, every moment of the Promised Messiah's(as) life was spent in fulfilling his divine mission, to revive and spread the true teachings of Islam throughout the world.

For example, on one occasion, the Promised Messiah(as) said that he continued to work until he felt as though he was about to collapse due to extreme exhaustion. Only at that point of complete fatigue would the Promised Messiah(as) lie down and rest for a short period. This was the noble example of the Promised Messiah(as) and it is our task to follow in his blessed footsteps.
I have no doubt that if the members of Waqf-e-Nau are able to collectively follow his example even to a very small degree they will be able to bring about a spiritual and moral revolution in the world.

In terms of your work, as you enter adulthood it is not essential that you will all be called into the full-time service of the Jama'at. As I said earlier, many of you, with the permission of the Jama'at, are employed elsewhere. However, wherever you are working, you must not let the world consume you and overtake your lives.Rather, your first priority must always remain your Waqf. You must strive to excel in the worship of Allah the Almighty and persistently endeavour to increase your moral and spiritual state and to increase your religious knowledge. Irrespective of where you are working or living, you must live your life as a practical manifestation of Islam's teachings and seek to propagate your religion far and wide..

Utilise your God-given capabilities and skills for the sake of your faith. Only if you live your life in this way will you be living as a true Waqf-e-Nau. On one occasion, the Promised Messiah(as) referred to the fact that Allah the Almighty has praised Hazrat Ibrahim(as) in the Holy Quran with the words:

وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ الَّذِي وَفَّىٰ

"And of Abraham who fulfilled the commandments?" (Ch.53, V.38)

This verse means that Hazrat Ibrahim(as) fulfilled the pledge he made to God Almighty with complete obedience and loyalty and, as a result, was the recipient of the love of His Creator.

Now it is up to all of you to fulfil the sacred covenant you have made with Allah the Almighty. To do so is not an easy or simple thing. The pledge of a Waqf-e-Zindigi and of a Waqf-e-Nau is a vast and everlasting undertaking. It is to give away your life for the sake of your faith.

As I have said already, it requires you to continually improve your standards of worship and to enhance your moral and spiritual state.

Unquestionably, if all the Waqifeen-e-Nau fulfil their pledges, we will certainly witness a great revolution and spiritual transformation in the world. However, there is a very long way to go.

Sometimes, young married couples come to meet me and the husband or the wife proudly says 'I am a Waqf-e-Nau, my wife or my husband is Waqf-e-Nau and so is our child'. It is good that their entire family is part of this blessed scheme. However, as I have said many times, just holding the title of Waqf-e-Nau is meaningless. It becomes meaningful when a member of Waqf-e-Nau understands the demands of their pledge and faithfully strives to fulfil it to the best of their abilities.

To honour your pledge requires constant effort, great passion and enormous sacrifices. It requires complete devotion to your Creator. The Promised Messiah(as) once said that the means to gain Allah's nearness is to manifest complete submission to Allah the Almighty in the way of Hazrat Ibrahim(as), who sacrificed his entire being and tolerated every possible hardship for the sake of Allah.

It is for this reason that Allah the Almighty has testified to the obedience and sincerity of Hazrat Ibrahim(as) in the Holy Quran. Hence, this is the standard which every member of Waqf-e-Nau should strive to emulate. At another place, the Promised Messiah(as) said that true loyalty and sincerity to God Almighty requires the death of one's own desires and aspirations. It requires that a person gladly forsakes all of his personal and material desires and is ready to tolerate all forms of rejection and humiliation for the sake of Allah the Almighty.

Furthermore, the Promised Messiah(as) said that idol worship does not simply mean to worship a tree or stone or anything such, rather anything and everything that stands in the way of a person gaining the nearness of Allah the Almighty, and takes precedence over Allah the Almighty is a form of idol worship.

All of you should deeply reflect upon this point and assess your own lives to see if you are being taken away from your faith by the many worldly activities and superficial pursuits that are common today. If such material interests cause a person to forget Allah the Almighty, how can he or she claim to follow the example of loyalty and obedience displayed by Hazrat Ibrahim(as) or to reach the standards expected by the Promised Messiah(as)?

Though many Waqf-e-Nau are busy with their professions or business, they must not let their worldly work interfere with their worship of Allah the Almighty. Similarly, children who play computer games or have other hobbies must ensure that these pursuits do not lead them to neglecting their prayers and religious duties.

Instead, they must develop the habit of leaving such things whenever it is time for Namaz and ensure that their faith always takes priority over worldly matters. The Promised Messiah(as) said that the members of his Jama'at should remember that until a person is completely sincere in their devotion to Allah the Almighty and willing to endure every trial and tribulation for His sake, they will not attain true morality and righteousness.

Hence, this is the standard of loyalty to your faith required to gain the nearness and blessings of Allah the Almighty. As I mentioned before, just being a part of the Waqf-e-Nau scheme and having this title is nothing to be proud of. Therefore, if someone informs me that he, his wife and children are all Waqf-e-Nau, they should realise that this alone means nothing until and unless they solemnly strive to reach the high standards of obedience required by the Promised Messiah(as).

Until you prioritise your religion over all worldly matters being part of Waqf-e-Nau is just worthless. In addition, you must always pray for yourselves that Allah the Almighty helps you to fulfil your duties and responsibilities to your faith. Here, I also wish to remind the younger boys who are still in Atfal, as well as the Khuddam that, as Waqf-e-Nau, you must be very active members of Atfal-ul-Ahmadiyya and Khuddam-ul-Ahmadiyya.

You should be role models for the other Atfal and Khuddam and be ready for any duty or sacrifice required. Furthermore, the standard of worship of a Waqf-e-Nau should be higher than other Ahmadis. As I have said, you must be diligent in offering Namaz in congregation and you should recite the Holy Quran every day. Only then can you call yourself a true Waqf-e-Nau.

Alongside the obligatory prayers, the older Waqf-e-Nau boys should offer Nafl prayers regularly. Only then can you call yourself a true Waqf-e-Nau.

Additionally, the older Atfal and all members of Khuddamul Ahmadiyiya should carefully read the translation of the Holy Quran and study the commentaries of the Promised Messiah(as) and the Khulafa. You should identify the commands of Allah the Almighty and be determined to act upon them to the best of your abilities.
Only then can you call yourself a true Waqf-e-Nau.

At all times, the conduct and manners of a Waqf-e-Nau should be of the highest order.
Only then can you call yourself a true Waqf-e-Nau.

Furthermore, whilst all Atfal and Khuddam should dress appropriately and should speak and interact with others in a respectful and moral way, Waqf-e-Nau should have even higher standards.
Only then can you call yourself a true Waqf-e-Nau.

Compared to girls, boys are more easily influenced by the immodesty and indecency prevalent in modern society. However, our boys should always guard their modesty and not fall prey to immoral and indecent activities.
Only then can you call yourself a true Waqf-e-Nau.

You should respect your parents, listen to them, care for them and pray for them.
Only then can you call yourself a true Waqf-e-Nau.

Likewise, treat your brothers and sisters with love and affection and set a pious example for them

to learn from. Only then can you call yourself a true Waqf-e-Nau.

If you are married you must set the best possible example for your wife and children. Treat them with love and care and fulfil their needs. Strive earnestly to ensure that the next generation of Ahmadis remains faithfully attached to the Jama'at. Only then can you call yourself a true Waqf-e-Nau.

Similarly, those of you are looking to get married, should seek pious Ahmadi girls so that your future generations are raised in a righteous environment. Only if you are playing your role in protecting the future of our Jama'at can you call yourself a true Waqf-e-Nau.

You should also be strong in body and strong in mind. You should be ready for hard work and any service for the sake of your faith. You should be ready to tolerate all challenges and to make all necessary sacrifices for the sake of the Jama'at. Only then can you call yourself a true Waqf-e-Nau.

In terms of Tabligh, Waqf-e-Nau should be at the forefront and consider it their personal duty to spread Islam's teachings. For this purpose, you must be armed with religious knowledge. Hence, I reiterate the importance of trying to understand the deeper meanings of the Holy Quran and to read the books and magazines published by our Jama'at.
Only then can you call yourself a true Waqf-e-Nau.

Moreover, always remember that it is the duty of a Waqf-e-Nau to propagate the mission and objectives of the Khalifa-e-Waqt and to be his constant helper. You can only do this if you are completely obedient to Khilafat. Only if you are following the guidance and instructions of Khalifa-e-Waqt can you urge others to do the same.

Whilst all Ahmadis should make it a regular habit to listen to my Friday sermons and other programmes, it is especially vital that Waqifeen-e-Nau listen and take notes and reflect upon what I have said and try to inculcate whatever they learn into their daily lives. Furthermore, a Waqf-e-Nau should be free from all forms of arrogance and pride.

Instead, humility and forbearance ought to be your hallmarks. Only if you try to develop all of these qualities will you be able to gain the pleasure and nearness of Allah the Almighty.

May Allah the Almighty enable all of you to understand your duties and responsibilities and to fulfil the demands of Waqf in the very best way.

Whether you are working full time for the Jama'at or working privately, you must strive to fulfil that sacred pledge made by your parents before your birth.

May Allah the Almighty enable you to continue to increase your knowledge and understanding of your faith.

May He grant you the capability to elevate your moral and spiritual standards and may He enable you to continually increase your service to the Jama'at and to fulfil your pledge with true sincerity – Ameen."